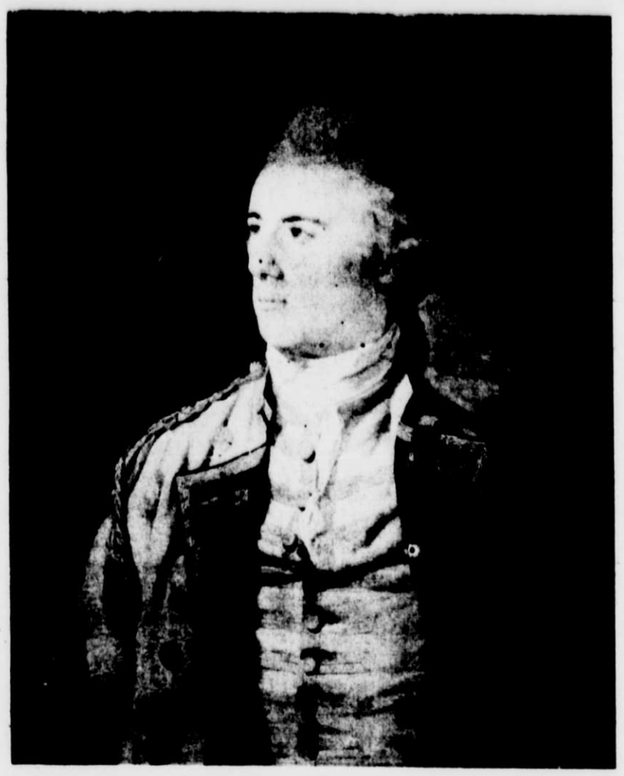
# WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE WORLD OF ART



PORTRAIT OF WILLIAM CATON BY TILLY KETTLE.
In the Knoedler exhibition of English portraits.

IF wishes were horses beggars might ride, and last night for one wild minute at midnight I wished myself Heinrich Heine. I had picked up Schopenhauer's essay upon the "Metaphysics of Art" partly to refresh myself after a busy day in the picture galleries, and partly since I always confess everything, partly, as a preparation for a study of the new works of Mr. Stephen Haweis, in the gallery of the Berlin Photographic Company; when without warning I chanced upon the following passage:

"It is to be observed that copper plates and monochromes answer to a more noble and elevated taste than chromographs and water colors; while the latter are preferred by persons of little culture."

Such a statement I have no doubt would upset the equanimity of even Mrs. Annie Nathan Myer; and of course it quite did for me. After that I could scarcely command the proper seriousness, and I fear, smiled at everything. Even the no doubt scientifically exact "reason why wax figures produce no æsthetic impression, and therefore are not in the æsthetic sense works of art at all," seemed to me to be tinged with the comic; so, too, the opinion that "painting equally with sculpture gives the form alone, for by the unavoidable suppression of the parallax of our two eyes a picture always makes things appear in the way a one eyed person would see them."

It is a sin to laugh at such things, and especially is it a sin upon my part, whose one aim in life it is to induce others than artists to look at and think about works of art. I should be in the seventh heaven, for instance, if our greatest living philosopher (his address, by the way, would be thankfully received by THE SUN art chronicler) could be induced to recount his personal art experiences; or if President Wilson would but consider it part of his duty to visit our Academy annually. The danger of such eminent persons falling into erroneous opinion and thus being held as instruments in the dissemination of false doctrines will be more than offset by the examples they give of actually contemplating works of art! I feel so strongly upon this point that I declare we shall never really have an art life here worthy of the name until our Presidents, Wall Street magnates, typists and athletes shall be compelled to go to art shows merely to be in the swim.

But in the meantime great philosophers are sometimes droll when they take up art, are they not?

I flung my Schopenhauer at my bust of Poe and raced to my book shelves for my Heine. It seemed to me that Heine upon such metaphysics of art would be delicious, but to my intense chagrin there was never a word. How can you account for that? It is thalers to pfennigs, no doubt, that Heine considered the great pessimist so far beneath him in the literary scale as to be quite unworthy of such advertisement as mockery would bring. Heine himself, of course, invariably spoke impeccable art jargon.

Nietzsche, too, is always to the manner born. It remained for him to stab Schopenhauer in the one vulnerable spot. "The sight of beauty in his case," he wrote, "acted as a kind of disengaging irritant upon the main power of his nature (the power of reflection and intensified eye), so that this power then exploded and, all of a sudden, gained the upper hand in consciousness." That is quite as amusing as anything Heine could have said, so we may safely consider that Schopenhauer as an art critic got his. It serves him right. Did he not say once that critics were women?

PORTRAIT OF A LADY (PASTEL) BY DANIEL GARDNER.
In exhibition of English portraits at Knoedler's.

HILL AND SEA, BY LEON KROLL.
In a recent Macdowell Club group exhibition.

THE BAHAMAS—1915, BY STEPHEN HAWEIS.
On exhibition in the Berlin Photographic Company's Gallery.

As Schopenhauer was the only real woman hater that ever lived be sure no compliment was meant.

It is Nietzsche, too, who bares the fundamental error of Schopenhauer when in speaking of Kant he says: "Like all philosophers, instead of approaching the problem of æsthetics from the experiences of the artist (the creator), he meditated over art and beauty merely from the standpoint of the 'spectator' and so quite unconsciously got the 'spectator himself' into his concept of beauty."

"All philosophers" is cruel; not to say unjust. Did not Lord Bacon write, "There is no excellent beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion," a remark so profound that an entire essay might be written around it, and was there not Heine? Heine was certainly a philosopher of a sort, yet he was never nonsensical about pictures. However, "the dear Emerson," as Walt Whitman calls him, did say some queer things in his essay on "Art," and everybody remembers the behavior of Thomas Carlyle when Jane took him to the opera.

Emerson, however, was an artist as well as a philosopher and wrote like an artist in part of his essay. Young geniuses even of to-day may take profit and no harm from a perusal of it, for our sophisticated young people know where to skip. What chiefly puzzles me is Emerson's difficulty with sculpture. "I cannot hide from myself," he wrote, "that there is a certain appearance of paltriness, as of toys and the trumpery of the theatre, in sculpture." Emerson when he wrote this had already been to Rome, but one suspects his cicerone must have been Hiram Powers. The impossibility of going as "nobly mad" over the "Greek Slave" of Powers, which was then our last word in sculpture, as one might over a living "beautiful woman," must have been the single example from which Emerson generalized.

Emerson's definition of genius, that it was the power "to generalize from a single example" is simply corking, but it must be confessed that our philosopher did not generalize well over sculpture. It was unlike him, too, to glance too narrowly at his own environment. "A popular novel, a theatre or a ballroom makes us feel that we are all paupers in the almshouse of this world, without dignity, without skill or industry. Art is as poor and low," he wrote. As a rule Emerson escaped more easily from his own epoch, and was as free from "the to-day" as Nietzsche boasted he was.

In spite of all this preparation, now that the moment arrives for the study of the works of Stephen Haweis, I find myself limp with weakness and fear. Lord Bacon and "the dear Emerson" have quite opposite views of the work of Mr. Haweis, it seems. It was half past 3 o'clock in the morning, as nearly as one may make out, when Hamlet exclaimed, "Oh, cursed spite that I was born to set it right," and his little difficulty was nothing in comparison to this entanglement; and the hour is the same.

Lord Bacon is against motion in pictures, but Mr. Haweis thinks he has that theory completely paralyzed. Strangely enough Emerson is for it. But listen to the philosophers; first the two Englishmen and then the American.

Lord Bacon: "In beauty that of favor is more than that of color and that of decent and gracious motion more than that of favor. That is the best part of beauty which a picture cannot express."

Mr. Haweis: "Deliberately cutting the line of certain trees in a picture, for example, and continuing them in another place near by gives me a sense of moving about before them."

Ralph Waldo Emerson: "Picture and sculpture are the celebrations and festivities of form. But true art is never fixed, but always flowing."

Now, truly, it seems to me that either Lord Bacon is right or Ralph Waldo is wrong. But even if Ralph Waldo be proved wrong may he still be held as agreeing perfectly with Mr. Haweis?

Scarcely.

What puzzles me personally is why Mr. Haweis went to Polynesia. Why do all the young people go to Tahiti? He says his childhood's glance fell first upon some Fijian relics sent from the island by his great-grandpapa, who was a missionary, and that the impression so gained stayed with him. But there must be more to it than that. Maurice Sterne's great-grandpapa was not a missionary, nor was Gauguin's. There must be something psychological in these great world movements in which such unlike characters join. Mr. Sterne isn't at all like Mr. Haweis, and Gauguin was less like a missionary than either of them.

Oh, Gauguin was far from being a missionary!

Have you ever read "Noa-Noa"?

Mr. Haweis writes well too. He is more serious when he writes than when he paints. When he paints he is pleasing, but light.

If Maurice Sterne must be hailed as the Milton of the recent Tahitian school of painters Mr. Haweis can be acclaimed its balladist.

The exhibition of works by the late John W. Alexander in the Arden Galleries is in the nature of a memorial. The custom of having such shows is prevalent in Europe and we are beginning to look upon this act of justice for all artists who have achieved eminence as necessary.

These memorials should even be official. In Paris they are usually held at the Beaux-Arts, which is easily accessible. The Metropolitan would be scarcely the location for such an exhibition here; it is still too much from the beaten track and still requires a special journey upon the part of most students. Galleries in the Public Library Building, could they be obtained for the purpose, would be more suitably placed; easily available and yet isolated. As part of such an immense and varied collection as our Metropolitan boasts of a memorial exhibition would be lost.

Mr. Alexander suffered less than most artists from the modern system that swiftly hides popular work away in private galleries, for his style was singularly even and his latest contributions to the public exhibitions were excellently representative. The present public has therefore had opportunity to arrive at an estimate of his powers. Even with this consideration in mind, however, the memorial exhibition brings forward one work without which it would be quite unfair to judge the artist—the portrait of Joe Jefferson as "Bob Acres."

All of Mr. Alexander's work is characterized by refinement, but the "Bob Acres" is his most finished production. It is a worthy monument to both artist and actor and none may look upon it without a sigh for the good old days that it conjures up.

The majority of the pictures are in the manner that was almost Mr. Alexander's own—a manner that depended to a large degree upon the peculiarly absorbent canvas that he used, and into which the diluted colors sunk much in the style of dyes upon fabrics or water colors upon paper. It is a matter of some comment that all of the works so painted have lasted well and seem quite as fresh as when first painted.

The one of Mr. Alexander's decorative works that aroused most discussion in it's day, the "Pot of Basil," is not included in the show. There are many, however, that have its flowing lines.

The exhibition continues until December 15.

The prints division of the Public Library has not often arranged an exhibition in which the subject matter is of such paramount interest as in the show just opened, devoted to "Portraits of Women." The persons portrayed strike a dominant note before the artistic quality asserts itself. The majority of persons in this gallery of portraits have played a certain role in the history of mankind in its various phases of activity.

Queens and royal favorites, artists and musicians, dancers and actresses, writers and social leaders pass before the eye in a profusion and variety somewhat kaleidoscopic in that their more or less related units merge into a highly interesting picture of womanhood. Not in the matter of costume only, but in the disclosure of character and attitude toward life, these portraits help to illustrate the spirit of successive generations and of different races of nations and they suggest a wealth of relevant detail.

The few portraits shown which represent ladies unknown to fame at least illustrate changing fashions and costume, and methods of portraiture, for after all the artistic interest is there and strongly in evidence though playing obbligato, as it were, to the main melody. All the portraits shown are etchings, engravings, or lithographs, sometimes reproductions of paintings, sometimes original etchings or lithographs, always by capable craftsmen and in many cases by artists of great repute.

If we approach the exhibition from the standpoint of the artist and of processes of engraving there is quite as much diversity as there is in the subjects portrayed. To mention but a few, there are line engravings by Faithorne, H. and J. Wierix, P. de Jode, as well as modern artists; a brave showing of British eighteenth century mezzotinters, J. R. Smith, the Watsons, Jones and the rest; modern mezzotints in colors by S. Arlent Edwards and others; wood engravings by Cole and even one attributed to Marie de Medici; lithographs by Cavarini, Grevedon and Kriehuber.

And the range of painters whose works are reproduced is equally wide. Titian, Van Eyck, Pollaiuolo and Mierevelt, Holbein and Reynolds.

These prints take us through a wide range of varying use of processes in styles reflecting a remarkable diversity in personal and racial viewpoint in the art both of painter and of engraver. The prints are ranged in chronological order by subjects, thus bringing reproductions in color mezzotints by Edwards of da Vinci's "Belle Ferronniere" next to a modern French line engraving of the same subject and the wood engraving by Cole of Mrs. Siddons, after Gainsborough, near J. R. Smith's reproduction of the same portrait.

If the result, from the artistic standpoint, is a mixture that may be a trifle disconcerting at first sight, it also emphasizes the national and individual viewpoints already referred to as well as the characteristics of the various processes of producing prints by the very force of strong contrasts.

A MODEL, BY ROBERT HENRI.
In a recent Macdowell Club group exhibition.